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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the extent to which women have attained administrative positions in California community colleges, highlights barriers to women's advancement and methods of overcoming them, and profiles the female college administrator. After citing the low incidence of female community college administrators and the increasing visibility of women in upper-level management, the paper examines the impact of affirmative action on the number of women in administration and identifies the subtle methods of discrimination still evidenced in the job application process. Next, factors contributing to women's lack of advancement are considered, e.g., childhood socialization and the "old boy network," and ways of preparing for an administrative career are suggested, for example, assertiveness training, keeping abreast of developments and job openings in the field, and organizing support groups. Recommendations are then offered for finding and securing administrative positions and ways are specified for institutions to help break down the barriers of sexual discrimination by, for example, sponsoring conferences for women aspirants to management positions or nominating women to commission posts. The next section presents a composite profile of women administrators in California community colleges and details the frustrations and satisfaction they experience on the job. The conclusion stresses the importance of women applying for administrative positions and of role models for future aspirants.

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: WOMEN IN ADMINISTRATION IN THE
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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FOREWARD

Equal opportunity for women in California's Community Colleges will not be achieved until women are as visible in top-level administrative positions as they are in the ranks of secretarial and clerical workers. This paper seeks to present a panoramic view of women in administration in California Community Colleges and show how equal opportunity can be facilitated.

Evidence of women in the environs of Community College administration is presented, spotlighting past and present incidence and trends. The impact of Affirmative Action and Title IX on increasing the number of women in administration is examined relative to both blatant and subtle forms of discrimination.

Once this groundwork is laid, several avenues of preparation for administrative careers are presented. Early socialization and lack of appropriate training and skills are described as barriers to success and solutions are offered for overcoming these barriers.

Specific suggestions for traveling the long and winding road to success as a Community College administrator are given for several success strategies including: 1) overcoming the limitations of early socialization; 2) building the skills necessary for an administrative career; 3) cultivating support groups and developing "new girl" networks; 4) finding and landing an administrative job; and 5) what institutions can do to assist.

"The View From the Top" profiles a typical California Community College administrator and gives her collective view of the satisfactions and frustrations that come with the job. Advice on how to get to the top from those who have arrived concludes this section and leads to a final summary of the topic and recommendations for breaking the unproductive circle that continues to make women a rarity in Community College administration.

INCIDENCE OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

Women are not highly visible in Community College administration. Those who have achieved administrative rank tend to be clustered in lower level administrative positions at less prestigious institutions.¹ The higher one looks in the academic hierarchy the fewer women are to be found. For example, in 1973 there were only five women Presidents of Community Colleges in the United States.²

CPEC³, the body which acts as clearinghouse, planning and evaluation agency and coordinator of the activities and programs of all of California's institutions of postsecondary education, emasses the most complete data available on postsecondary education staff by sex, race, rank, tenure status and salary. According to CPEC's figures, women held only 13% of administrative positions in California Community Colleges statewide as of Fall 1975.⁴ A recent (1979) report credits the California Community Colleges with employing women in 19.7% of its executive/administrative/managerial positions (as compared to 32.3% in U.C's and 59% in CSUS's).⁵ However, the criteria for classifying a position as executive/administrative/managerial were narrowed and clarified in July 1979 so that lower level supervisors and administrative assistants could no longer be classified as administrators at California Community Colleges at the level of Dean or higher are women.⁷ Although the numbers of female administrators appear to be declining with this redefinition, women are nevertheless becoming more

visible at the administrative levels. The question is why? Have Affirmative Action and Title IX contributed to the increase in women in administration?

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND TITLE IX ON THE PREVALENCE OF WOMEN IN ADMINISTRATION

At this time, there is little evidence, except of an anecdotal nature, that Affirmative Action programs have either helped or hindered women aspiring to administrative careers. Affirmative Action is far from being fully implemented in most districts and although blatant discrimination is rare, many forms of subtle discrimination still operate to exclude women from top level positions.

A key factor in gaining the experience required for top administrative jobs is work on committees and receiving special assignments dealing with college governance. Although men and women have been found to be equally interested in such matters and are equally willing to serve on committees, men are much more likely to be involved.⁸ Women apparently have not been integrated into the male-dominated network of service on committees, senates and council--the training grounds for administrative careers. Special assignments and release time are granted on an individual basis. Since present administrators are predominantly male, they are most apt to think of other males when granting special assignments and release time. A male faculty member is more likely to find a "mentor" than a female faculty member for this same reason. It is largely

through mentors and experience with special assignments that future administrators are "groomed."

Besides being largely excluded from informal grooming processes, women may encounter major stumbling blocks in gaining positions they are eminently qualified for. "Filters" that screen out women candidates throughout the employment process are likely to be so subtle as to go unnoticed. Yet they may be the most effective barriers to equal opportunity.

For example, women are often filtered out during the recruiting stage. They do not belong to the informal "old boy network" which passes information of openings and how to land them through the ranks of male friends or "buddies" at other institutions. Narrowly advertising an opening within a district which may have no qualified women candidates also filters out many qualified applicants. Finally, sexist language in the job description itself conveys a subtle but clear message that women are not wanted and need not apply.

If a woman applicant has survived the initial filtering process there are further barriers. At the applicant stage a woman may be singled out and her application downgraded by a suggestion that she apply for a lesser position she may be more likely to get. Illegal questions on the form present her with the dilemma of giving up her rights or forgetting the job.

The selection criteria for a given job can also serve as effective filters. By requiring more years of experience than most women have without making an allowance for comparable alternate experience women can be quickly eliminated from the applicant pool.

During the interview a woman often finds herself facing an all-male group of interviewers trying to elicit personal data from her, or acknowledging their appreciation of her as a sex object. She must receive these inputs and respond not only knowledgeably but tactfully, or she will filter herself out.

Finally, there is the selection process itself. Here a woman may be rejected because she is too "aggressive" while a man may be hired for the same reason. Or she may be selected as an equal opportunity token and set up for failure and early elimination. Frequently she is offered the position, but with a different title and salary.⁹

While equal employment opportunity laws exist to defend against some of these practices they do not insure protection against most subtle forms of discrimination. Hence it is doubtful that affirmative action has been of much help in getting women into administrative posts. Largely, it has been due to the hard work and determination of a few women that there are now "pioneers" in the upper levels of academe. The very fact that women in administration consistently prove to be more highly qualified and competent than their male counterparts demonstrates that Affirmative Action has not been a primary force in gaining them their posts. As D. M. Tumpano says: "equality of employment opportunity will exist not when a female Einstein is appointed administrative assistant, but when a woman schlemiel moves ahead as fast as a male schlemiel."¹⁰ Now for a look at just how females can move ahead.

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD: HOW TO PREPARE
FOR A CAREER IN ADMINISTRATION

The first step toward becoming an administrator is not taken when a woman files her application or even when she graduates from college, but begins years before, in early childhood. The attitudes she develops about what are appropriate goals and aspirations for females are highly susceptible to the pressures of society, parents and peers. The first step begins with seeing that possibilities exist for her beyond the stereotyped roles of wife, mother, secretary, nurse or teacher. She must learn that girls can be leaders as well as followers, that achievement is as important for girls as for boys, and that success isn't unfeminine. She must have the experience of individual and team competition as well as cooperation. It is significant that the majority of top level women administrators are only or eldest children.¹¹ They gained by virtue of their birth order the experiences they may otherwise have been denied because of their sex.

But changes in early socialization for girls is only half of the solution to their traditionally narrow perspectives. The attitude of boys is also crucial to the development of the woman administrator. Adult men who excluded girls from their play as boys, considered it the world's most hideous punishment to have to work or play with "gurruls" and were taught to mortally fear being caught doing anything feminine, are going to find it very hard to view women as equals or be able to work under women

administrators. Healthy attitudes toward females must not only be nurtured in girls but in those others who are going to have to work with them--little boys.¹²

These major barriers to equal employment opportunity for women are diminishing but it will be a long time before they disappear. What of the woman who, despite imperfect socialization, is willing to buck the odds and strive for a career in administration? What does she need to know in order to make it?

Many of the skills a woman will need will be foreign to her. They are not part of female socialization so extra time and effort must be expended to learn them. With the traditional avenues for learning job appropriate skills (the mentor system, special assignments, etc.) largely closed to her, she has had to look elsewhere for the training she will need.

Several national and regional programs have been developed to teach women the skills they will need for administration.¹³ Such programs represent one of the most popular strategies of the 70's for facilitating the entry of women into academic administration. The focus of the programs has changed since they began in the northeast in 1973. Early programs attempted to provide the informal training experiences women have been historically excluded from which prepare faculty for senior administrative posts. These programs attempted to fill the role of a "mentor."

More recently the programs have emphasized the management skills and fiscal knowledge that are generally seen as necessary for administrators of both sexes. Thirty-six percent of the women participating in a Higher Education Resources Services (HERS) program reported that it had a positive effect on their careers.¹⁴

There are many other ways women can prepare for administrative careers. Some involve learning to overcome the limitations of female socialization such as: 1) enroll in an assertiveness training course; 2) learn to "blow your own horn" to supervisors; 3) learn to delegate responsibility; 4) become familiar with the dynamics of team competition and teamwork; and 5) change your own usage of the generic "he" in writing and speaking to reflect s/he.¹⁵

Other preparatory suggestions are aimed toward building skills: 1) read journals and keep abreast of current educational thought; 2) use summers for taking courses, doing volunteer work or whatever would be helpful toward your career;¹⁶ 3) join professional organizations and actively participate; 4) express a desire to serve on committees and special projects and do so; and 5) find out when budget planning begins and ask to be included. Attend open hearings on the budget.¹⁷

Still other suggestions involve cultivating support groups and communication "new girl" networks: 1) find out and get to know the person in charge of Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Title IX; 2) keep posted on vacancies and share

information with other women; 3) join professional organizations whose primary membership is women in administrative roles; 4) establish ties with community women's organizations; 5) get involved in the campus commission for women or equal opportunity committee; 6) establish a women's caucus on campus for intra-institutional communication; and 7) support male colleagues who promote opportunities for women.¹⁸

Finally, some specific suggestions for finding/landing a job include: 1) let the head person or people in your institution know your aspirations; 2) don't let administrators pick your brains without giving you credit; 3) attend conferences and conventions and make acquaintances that might help you find an administrative job; and 4) take advantage of the laws.¹⁹

Not all the preparatory steps need be taken by women unassisted. They can be supported in many ways by their institutions. Educational institutions can help women achieve equal employment opportunity for leadership roles by: 1) sponsoring conferences for women who aspire to management positions; 2) identifying talented women and nominating them to posts on commissions etc., where they will gain important experience; 3) providing opportunities to participate in short term internships and apprenticeships and 4) assisting women in getting the graduate training and academic credentials associated with leadership.²⁰

To get ahead women must be extremely competent at every stage of their advancement. They must master the skills of administration and at the same time learn the informal mechanisms of communication.²¹ Women must learn to "network"²² and to support each other. In the past, women have not been supportive of fledgling woman professionals but this trend is reversing.²³ With raised consciousness women are identifying with each other more and forming support groups that increase the esteem and success of all. Together, men, women and institutions can eliminate barriers and provide opportunities whereby equal employment opportunity will become truly a reality. For some the reality is here - or close at hand.

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

A composite profile of a top level Community College female administrator reveals a person who was an only or eldest child of parents who expected her to succeed in her chosen field. She works in a large Southern California Community College in a third level administrative position with a title of Dean and has been at that same institution throughout her career. She (70.3%) didn't plan for an administrative career²⁴ but at the suggestion of others, became interested in such a career at age 39 and became an administrator at 40.²⁵ She is now 52 years old and has been in administrative work for 12 years. She

married when she was 27 and has been married for 25 years.²⁶
(Except for presidents, who tend to be divorced or single.²⁷)
And finally, she has ambitions to advance higher.²⁸

Women in administration express a high degree of job satisfaction.²⁹ However, their sense of satisfaction has been from a sense of personal worth rather than from the working climate or other external factors.³⁰

There are frustrations as well as satisfactions for top level administrative women. The most common source of frustration is being seen as a stereotypical female first and a professional second. Being delegated to serve as secretary at meetings, and indeed being asked by the public to "see the boss" when you are the boss, are common experiences. Women administrators are frustrated by having to demonstrate their competence in each new situation whereas male colleagues are automatically judged competent. Many feel their performance has to be superb in order to merely prove themselves competent. Being excluded from the old boy network also proves frustrating for many executive women.³¹ Finally, the single administrator is often frustrated by being expected to fill the double roles of administrator and hostess/entertainer for her colleagues. In other words she is expected to fill the role the administrator's wife usually fills in addition to her role as administrator.³²

Despite the frustrations, the objective still looks mighty appealing to competent and ambitious women who enjoy a challenge. The bookshelves of many forward looking women bulge with advice-

giving treatises on how to get to the top written by those who should know. Women administrators responding to a variety of questionnaires and speaking to a number of journalists repeatedly emphasize the following themes: 1) be qualified (get the advanced degree); 2) women have to be willing to work harder, longer and be more dedicated than their male colleagues to get ahead; 3) keep outwardly calm, taking both good and bad in stride; 4) keep a sense of humor - it will be needed; 5) be flexible; 6) be assertive, but learn to negotiate; 7) be willing to take risks and make decisions; 8) set goals in career planning and set appropriate position targets;³³ 9) it is important that husband and family be supportive of a woman's professional career³⁴ or that she have a support group of friends and/or colleagues;³⁵ and finally 10) be around at the right time!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The number of females in college administration is dismally low. A number of contributing factors have been discussed from early socialization and lack of opportunities for training to failure to take advantage of what opportunities do exist because of lack of planning and initiative. The result is an "unproductive circle" which is keeping the incidence of female administrators low.³⁶ In this circle there are few role models of successful female administrators to encourage and assist those who might aspire to such careers. Consequently, most women are not ready to contemplate applying for non-traditional careers in high-

level administration. Without applicants there will be no role models. Without role models an increase in applicants seems unlikely.

Nevertheless there are a few women gaining visibility and credibility as administrators. Training programs are attracting growing numbers of women and encouraging them to consider administrative careers. Most importantly, women are forming support groups and new girl networks amongst themselves and working together within institutional settings to make inroads into the traditional male bastions of administration and break the unproductive circle.

FOOTNOTES

¹Marian Lief Palley, "Women as Academic Administrators in the Age of Affirmative Action," JNAWDA&C, 42(1):3-9, Fall 1978.

²Alice J. Thurston, "A Woman President?!: A study of two-year college presidents," JNAWDA&C, 38:118-123, Spring 1975.

³The California Postsecondary Education Commission.

⁴CPEC, Equal Educational Opportunity in California Postsecondary Education, Part II, Report 77-4, June 1977, p. 56.

⁵"CPEC Study: Community Colleges are More Diverse in their Staffing," Newsletter of the CCJCA, October 1979, p. 6.

⁶"Preliminary Report: AB 105 Study: Sex and Ethnicity of Faculty and Staff in California's Public Colleges and Universities," CPEC, July 1979.

⁷Phyllis L. Wiedman, "Management Report 79/1: A study of women administrators in California Community Colleges," Association of California Community College Administrators, May 1979.

⁸Julia K. Muller, "Interest and Involvement of Women in University Governance," JNAWDA&C, 42(1):10-15, Fall 1978.

⁹D. M. Tumpano, "How to Tell if You're Discriminating Against Would-Be Women Administrators and What to do About It If You Are," American School Board Journal, 163:19-23, June 1976.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Nancy A. Nieboer, "There is a Certain Kind of Woman," JNAWDA&C, 38:99-103, Spring 1975.

¹²Mary Ellen Verheyden-Hilliard, "Kindergarten: the training ground for women in administration," JNAWDA&C, 38:151-5, Summer 1975.

¹³Rae Andre and Mary I. Edwards, "Training Women for Administration," JNAWDA&C, 42(1):16-22, Fall 1978.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Susan R. Gordon and Patricia G. Bell, "Survival Dynamics for Women in Education Administration," JNAWDA&C, 40(2):46-48, Winter, 1978.

- ¹⁶Patricia Palmieri and Charol Smith Shakeshaft, "Up the Front Staircase: A proposal for women to achieve parity with men in the field of Educational administration," JNAWDA&C, 39:58-65, Winter 1976.
- ¹⁷Gordon and Bell, loc. cit.
- ¹⁸Ibid.
- ¹⁹Ibid.
- ²⁰Betty Blaska, "Women in Academe - the need for support groups," JNAWDA&C, 39:173-178, Summer 1976.
- ²¹Palmieri and Shakeshaft, loc. cit.
- ²²Nieboer, loc. Cit.
- ²³Amy Plumer, "Academe's New-Girl Network," Change, 10:18-21, June/July 1978.
- ²⁴Wiedman, loc. cit.
- ²⁵Virginia T. Pfiffner, "Composite Profile of a Top Level California Community College Woman Administrator," JNAWDA&C, 40(1):16-18, Fall 1976.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷Gael M. O'Brien, "The Trials of Women's College Presidents," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 14(21):8-9, August 1977.
- ²⁸Wiedman, loc. cit.
- ²⁹Judith Cochran, "How do Women Administrators View Job Satisfaction and Discrimination?" JNAWDA&C, 41:67-68, Winter 1978.
- ³⁰Mary Elizabeth Reeves, "An Analysis of Job Satisfaction of Women Administrators in Higher Education," JNAWDA&C, 38:132-136, Spring 1975.
- ³¹Wiedman, loc. cit.
- ³²O'Brien, loc. cit.
- ³³Joan D. Abrams, "From One Who Made It: Advice to women on their way up in school administration," American School Board Journal, 165:27-28, July 1978.

³⁴Wiedman, loc. cit.

³⁵Alice Thurston, "The Woman's View from the Top," Community and Junior College Journal, 46(4):16-20, Dec./Jan. 1976.

³⁶Nieboer, loc. cit.

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